

Ranchers In Short Grass Country Exhibit Strange Behavior Traits

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MERTZON — At odd moments during the past few months I have been making notes on the psychological makeup of ranchers in this section of the state.

There would be no justification for this study if the subjects were all ex-piccolo players with the Philadelphia Symphony, or fiery-bearded artists who recently resided in the garrets of New York City, but since raising beef, wool, and a small amount of mohair are as closely related to these emotion-stirring arts as running a mono-seated ski lift is to passenger schedules of the Santa Fe Railroad, it seems worthwhile to determine why ranchers in the short grass country have such temperamental natures.

I have classified the ranchers in three categories:

CLASS A

This is an extremely sensitive, high-strung character. He is given to such overt actions as stomping his hat, pounding coffee house tables, and thrashing about in general over the mere mention of topics pertaining to unionized labor, taxes, low tariffs on agricultural products, and government controls.

This class is considered dangerous at close quarters especially when tax season is near (a small portion of this study was completed before taxes were due every day).

His is an outspoken individual who despises dry weather and doesn't mind letting the rest of the world know it.

CLASS B

The Class B rancher is a much calmer human than his Class A neighbor. But he, too, is prone to fall into a hysterical outburst upon being confronted with reports of tax increases or newspaper clippings extolling the merits of protecting predatory animals. He is passionately opposed to drouth, yet he isn't as demonstrative as Hombre A. Nevertheless, if prodded by some out-of-state wag's comment on the absence of moisture in his homeland, or if incited by the radio's cheery forecast of 90 days of perfect picnic weather, he can stage a tantrum so fierce as to be felt by the entire neighborhood.

This type person is considered harmless, and yet he can grow violent under the influence of any stimulant, from a cup of weak tea to a small shot of 180-proof rum.

CLASS C

This is a withdrawn soul who is given to staring into space. He is often observed sitting in his pickup or on his horse out on a high knoll, gazing over the land he either owns or leases. Frequently he can be heard mumbling over and over, "I'll just be double-damned."

He reacts only mildly to most forms of taxation. But when the subject of inheritance or estate taxes arises, for some unexplained reason he glares like a cornered jungle cat. No one is certain how he feels about dry weather, as he normally spends most of his time at the ranch.

This mild-mannered individual does not appear dangerous. There is reason to believe that, so long as he has a hundred or so dollars to call his own, and grass as much as half an inch high in the low places, he wouldn't harm a fly. However, under present conditions, he might one day rebel and turn into an uncontrollable, bellowing fighter that would shock an old time boxing fan.

After classifying these three groups, I am still unable to pinpoint the underlying reasons for my neighbors' actions. Eventually I plan to run my notes over to an expert in the field of human behavior, and then definite findings can be revealed.

Meanwhile, we can merely speculate on what motivates the short grass rancher to be a moody, strange character who apparently is having a tough time adjusting to the the jet pace of the Great Society.